

➤ *Traveling in Black Bear Country*

Our carelessness with food spells death for bears. When bears repeatedly obtain human food and garbage, these intelligent animals learn quickly to seek more. They become destructive and dangerous, and — too often — must be killed. Regulations require proper food storage and prohibit feeding of any wildlife; violations can result in a fine of up to \$5,000. But stronger than legal obligations is the moral responsibility to respect the wilderness. Having entered the bears' territory, don't let your carelessness destroy them. (Black bears are the only bears in Sequoia and Kings Canyon. This information does not apply to grizzly bears, which inhabit some northern areas.)

Proper food storage is required. For details on approved methods, please see page 7.

■ The use of approved, bear-resistant canisters or panniers is the recommended method of food storage in the Parks and is required in some areas (see below for areas that require portable food storage containers). Portable bear-resistant canisters are available for sale or rent at Lodgepole, Grant Grove, Cedar Grove, Mineral King, and the Foothills Visitor Center. For a list of approved models, current food storage regulations, and tips on how to pack a canister, please visit www.sierrawildbear.gov. Canisters not only protect food, they also provide flexibility in choosing a campsite.

■ Food storage boxes are provided in some locations throughout the parks. Storage box locations are listed on page 7. The boxes are bear resistant but have some disadvantages, such as filling up quickly or limiting potential campsites. Keep in mind that boxes are shared and must never be locked. In areas where canisters are required, food storage boxes may only be used by through hikers on the John Muir or Pacific Crest Trails.

■ Hanging of food is not recommended except as a last resort. It is difficult to do well, requires proper trees and rope, and often proves to be ineffective. In restricted areas where portable food storage containers are required, hanging food will result in a citation. If you need to hang food, plan to camp and eat before nightfall; it is difficult to properly hang food in the dark. If food must be hung, plan for extra time to do it properly and reinforce it with a human guard.

Before your trip

■ Avoid taking odorous foods; they attract bears. Decide what method of food storage you will use. Metal food storage boxes are located in several areas. Keep in mind that you must share them with others; locking boxes is not permitted. Carry rope for hanging food in case the box is full or you don't camp where you intended. In some areas the use of portable food containers is required.

■ Don't leave food and containers (ice chests, bags, cans) in cars at the trailhead. You must use trailhead food storage boxes where available. If there are none, contact a ranger for alternatives. Bears break into vehi-



cles if they see or smell signs of food.

■ Remember: Firearms of any type are prohibited in the parks. Bears are interested in your food, not you. There has never been a fatality due to bears recorded in these parks.

On the trail

■ To keep food from bears and other animals during breaks, never leave your backpack unattended — even for a short time.

Around camp

■ Store soap, sunscreen, deodorant, toothpaste, and garbage in the same way as food. Bears are attracted to anything with an odor. Use the counterbalance method to hang food from trees only when canisters or storage boxes are not available. To better defend hanging food, camp near but not under it.

■ By making loud noises and throwing objects, you can often scare bears away before they get your food. Be bold, but keep a safe distance and use good judgment. Never attempt to retrieve food from a bear. Never approach a bear or get near a cub. Bears are active day and night. At night and any time you are away from camp, remove all food from packs and store it properly. Leave your pack on the ground with flaps and pockets open. When you leave, clean out the storage box and take all garbage with you. If a bear gets your food, it not only leaves hungry hikers and a mess, but it leaves a bear that

is one step further from being wild. You are responsible for cleaning up and packing out all debris, and for reporting it to the nearest ranger.

After your trip

■ Report all injuries, property damage, or unusual encounters with bears to a park ranger before leaving the parks.

➤ *Food Storage Regulations*

Some areas in and around Sequoia and Kings Canyon require the use of park approved portable, bear resistant food storage containers. At the time of printing, those areas included the Rae Lakes Loop/ Bubbs Creek and Dusy Basin in Kings Canyon, and Onion Valley and the Mount Whitney Trail on the Inyo National Forest. Additional areas may be added.

Please check our website (www.sierrawildbear.gov) or call the wilderness office for the most up to date regulations and list of approved portable containers.

➤ *Altitude illness*

Altitude illness can strike anyone. Lack of sleep, alcohol, and/or drugs may make things worse. Typically, it occurs at altitudes over 10,000 feet, but there have been serious cases as low as 8,000 feet. Allow time for slow ascent, adjusting gradually to altitude. Awakening with temporary shortness of breath or gasping is not uncommon. This alone is normally no cause for alarm. Acute mountain sickness (AMS) is usually a mild illness with headache, nausea, difficulty sleeping and fatigue. It is often treatable with rest, fluids and aspirin. When AMS becomes severe, two life threatening conditions may result.

■ High altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) causes extreme shortness of

breath; the need to sit up to breathe; extreme fatigue; wheezing or coughing; and/or the inability to sleep.

■ The signs of high altitude cerebral edema (HACE) are very severe headache, vomiting, confusion, loss of balance or coordination, and in later stages, loss of consciousness.

Immediate descent to low altitude is the only real cure. Get immediate help; the condition can progress rapidly and death can result. The victim may be walked slowly to low altitude if his/her condition is not too severe. Very weak victims should be carried to lower elevation. If your party cannot evacuate them, find a ranger who can call for additional assistance.

➤ *Military overflights*

Much of Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness underlies special military-use airspace — the R-2508 Complex.

Military pilots train for combat missions here by flying low and fast, which can be very startling to people and stock. In the portion of the R-2508 complex that is over these parks, pilots are required to fly no lower than 3,000 feet above ground level.

Occasionally lower flights do occur. If you witness an incident you feel is questionable, please report it to: R-2508



Central Coordinating Facility, 1 Rosamond Blvd., Edwards Air Force Base, CA 93524-8090, or call them at (661) 277-3510.

Note the time, location, direction of flight, and describe the aircraft

in as much detail as possible. Please send a copy of your letter to the park.



➤ *You're in Cougar Country*

For many of us, the cougar or mountain lion is the quintessential symbol of wilderness — a large animal ranging freely in wild areas, independent of human interference. They are the largest carnivore in the parks, the apex of a food chain.

When visiting lion habitat, we should understand the behavior of these cats and act accordingly to protect them and ourselves. While the likelihood of seeing a lion is small, and the chance of encountering an aggressive one even less, it is wise to be prepared; cougars have attacked people and pets. In general, avoid hiking alone. Watch children closely, never let them run ahead on the trail.

If you do cross paths with a mountain lion, remember — the goal is to convince it that you are not prey

and may be dangerous yourself. Use the following tips:

- DON'T RUN! Cougars tend to chase things that run because they associate running with prey.
- Do not crouch down; try to appear as large as possible. Attempts to hide are unsuccessful; cougars see most people long before people spot them.
- Hold your ground, or move away slowly while facing the lion.
- If little children are with you, pick them up.
- If the lion behaves aggressively, wave your hands, shout, and throw stones or sticks at it.
- If attacked, fight back!

Report any mountain lion sightings to a ranger as soon as possible.